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A non-partisan Office of the Legislature

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Annual Report 2004/2005

for the period April 1, 2004 to March 31, 2005

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For more information on Elections BC
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September 22, 2005

The Honourable Bill Barisoff
Speaker of the Legislative Assembly
Province of British Columbia
Parliament Buildings
Victoria, British Columbia
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Honourable Speaker:

I have the honour to present the 2004/2005 Annual Report of the Chief Electoral Officer to the Legislative Assembly, in accordance with section 13(1)(a) of the *Election Act*.

This Annual Report of the Chief Electoral Officer covers the period April 1, 2004 to March 31, 2005.

Sincerely,

Harry Neufeld
Chief Electoral Officer

copy: Mr. E. George MacMinn, Q.C.
Clerk of the Legislative Assembly

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Message from the Chief Electoral Officer

This annual report marks Elections BC's tenth anniversary as an independent Office of the Legislature. It also marks ten years since British Columbia's election legislation was extensively updated.

In 2002, my office was faced with a three-year budget reduction of 35% from the annual appropriation of 2001/02. The reductions posed a tremendous challenge to the organization, as it would not be able to meet its ongoing legislated mandate unless significant changes were made. A comprehensive review of Elections BC's mandate, goals, and core requirements resulted in a dramatic restructuring of the organization.

The new structure was fully in place by June 2004. Implementing the new structure, continuing with the ongoing work of our office and preparing for the 38th general election required extraordinary efforts by every staff member at Elections BC. I am proud of how my office was able to meet this challenge, adapt quickly to the changes that were needed and keep moving forward.

The fiscal year 2004/05 was one of hard work, evolution, innovation, teamwork and accomplishments for Elections BC. Planning and preparing for the May 17, 2005 provincial general election was our primary focus. For a provincial general election, Elections BC grows from a base of 31 employees to over 31,000 temporary employees on General Voting Day. A voluminous number of guides, training materials, manuals, forms and election materials need to be produced and distributed. District Electoral Officers and Deputy District Electoral Officers must be appointed for each of the 79 electoral districts and undergo extensive training to fulfill their complex role in administering an election.

We also prepared to administer the Referendum on Electoral Reform in conjunction with the 38th general election. This involved working closely with the Legislative Counsel office to develop the *Electoral Reform Referendum Regulation*, detailing the methodology and procedures for conducting the referendum.

In parallel with these tasks we continued our usual work, including administering the registration activities of political parties and constituency associations, reviewing and auditing their annual financial reports, and maintaining the provincial voters list. Maintaining the voters list is one of the most costly elements of the electoral process. We are continuously searching for more effective and efficient ways to ensure the voters list is as current, complete and accurate as possible.

In 2004/05, we introduced a significant innovation to voter registration. Voters can now register, update or confirm their registration information online through our website 24 hours a day. British Columbia is the first jurisdiction in North America to offer fully automated Internet voter registration. Online voter registration was successfully implemented in September 2004 and used to register voters for the October 2004 Surrey-Panorama Ridge by-election. Between the start of our province-wide voter registration campaign on February 2004 to the end of March 2005, over 100,000 voters registered, updated or confirmed their registration information via the Internet.

This past year also saw the successful merging of the provincial and federal voters lists. In May 2004 the *Election Act* was amended to permit Elections BC to use the National Register of Electors (NRoE) as a registration and update source. The incorporation of NRoE data in December 2004 increased provincial registration by nearly 600,000 voters.

Elections are the legitimizing foundation of a functioning democracy. It is the responsibility of Elections BC to serve the people of British Columbia by giving effect to their democratic rights. We do that by providing fair and impartial administration of the provincial electoral process.

Elections BC is committed to continuously improving how we administer the electoral process in British Columbia. Establishing clear goals, realistic objectives and meaningful performance measures guides our work and helps us ensure that organizational efforts stay focused on the results we want to achieve.

This report chronicles my office's activities over the past fiscal year and describes our continuing efforts towards achieving our vision of being leaders in electoral administration.

Harry Neufeld
Chief Electoral Officer
September 2005

About Elections BC

Vision, Mission, Mandate and Goals

Vision

To be leaders in electoral administration.

Mission

To serve the people of British Columbia, by giving effect to their democratic rights, through fair and impartial administration of the electoral process.

Mandate

To administer the provincial electoral process in British Columbia in accordance with the *Election Act*, *Recall and Initiative Act*, *Referendum Act*, and *Constitutional Amendment Approval Act*.

Goals

Excellence in impartial electoral administration
Public awareness and understanding of the electoral process
Ensuring the electoral process is accessible and inclusive

Overview and Core Business Areas

Elections BC is a non-partisan Office of the Legislature responsible for the fair and impartial administration of provincial elections and referenda, recalls and initiatives. Elections BC is the usual name for the Office of the Chief Electoral Officer. As a statutory Officer of the Legislature, the Chief Electoral Officer reports directly to the Legislative Assembly through the Speaker. The Chief Electoral Officer cannot be a member of a political party, make contributions to a party or candidate, or vote in provincial elections.

Elections BC has a staff of 31 permanent employees and an annual operating budget of $6,508,000 (fiscal 2005/06) for expenses not directly attributable to a specific electoral event. For financial and administrative purposes the organization is divided into four core business areas.

Event Administration

Elections BC must maintain a constant state of readiness for elections, by-elections, referenda, and recall and initiative campaigns. These events can occur at any time, often with overlapping time frames. During a provincial general election, Elections BC grows from a base of 31 employees to over 31,000 employees on General Voting Day. Though the dates of provincial general elections are now fixed, the Lieutenant Governor retains the prerogative to dissolve the Legislative Assembly at any time, thereby causing a general election.

Voter Registration and Electoral Geography

Voter registration and voters list maintenance are an important part of our day-to-day operations. Elections BC is continuously striving to find more effective and efficient methods of ensuring the provincial voters list is maintained at high levels of coverage, currency and accuracy. This business area is also responsible for the maintenance of a geo-spatial database containing B.C.'s electoral boundaries, road network and address data, as well as providing a variety of services and products necessary for the administration of electoral events.

Public Awareness and Education

Elections BC provides public information regarding voter registration and the electoral process. This includes ensuring the public, media, political parties and other stakeholders have access to a wide range of information, both between and during electoral events. The business area is responsible for developing a comprehensive communications strategy for each electoral event to ensure timely, effective and efficient communications with political parities, constituency associations, candidates, voters and other individuals and organizations, as required under the *Election Act* and *Recall and Initiative Act*.

Electoral Finance

This business area is responsible for the registration of political parties, constituency associations, advertising sponsors and other participants in the electoral process. Electoral Finance reviews all financing reports required to be filed by participants to ensure compliance with the *Election Act*, the *Recall and Initiative Act* and regulations under the *Referendum Act*. This includes conducting required periodic investigations of the financial affairs of registered political entities.

Overview of Activities

Legislative Changes – Bill 54

In the past two years, the Chief Electoral Officer requested a number of changes to the *Election Act* to enable Elections BC to increase the quality of the provincial voters list and to apply more efficient and cost-effective approaches to increasing voters list coverage – the percentage of eligible voters registered in British Columbia.

In May 2004, Bill 54, *Miscellaneous Statutes Amendment Act (No. 2), 2004*, received Royal Assent, amending the *Election Act* to permit Elections BC to use the National Register of Electors to update the provincial voters list. Elections BC may now automatically register qualified voters who are on the federal voters list, greatly improving the quality of the provincial voters list at little cost to British Columbia.

Bill 54 also enabled Elections BC to become the first electoral agency in North America to provide voter registration via the Internet, by removing the requirement that applications for voter registration be signed by the applicant. A voter is still required to sign a written declaration of eligibility before being provided a ballot for an election.

Other legislative changes provided greater flexibility to the Chief Electoral Officer in the appointment of District Registrars of Voters, and clarified how the place of residence for voters without a home is to be determined for the purposes of voter registration. An individual who has no dwelling place may register as a voter on the basis that the individual's place of residence is a shelter, hostel or similar institution that provides food, lodging or other social services.

National Register of Electors

Although the concept of mutually sharing voter information with Elections Canada had been discussed for a number of years, the concept could not become a reality until 2004/05. The primary hurdles to implementation were legislative restrictions and data compatibility issues between the two organizations.

Legislative amendments made in 2004 tightened restrictions on non-electoral use of the voters list and permitted the use of the National Register of Electors (NRoE) for provincial list maintenance and general registration.

The principal challenge the electoral agencies faced regarding data compatibility was in the reconciliation of address information, a key component of any voter record. With modifications, Elections BC's Integrated Digital Electoral Atlas (InDEA) was able to accept the federal address data and then geocode and reconcile it into its spatial database.

By the end of 2004, Elections BC had completed its full integration of the NRoE with the provincial voters list. The end result saw an increase to the provincial list of approximately 600,000 individuals, constituting an automatic 22% increase in registered voters.

Elections Canada and Elections BC have both committed to continue exploring ways to take advantage of a more coordinated approach in preparation for future provincial and federal electoral events.

Online Voter Registration

On September 14, 2004, Elections BC launched its online voter registration (OVR) system. Following a spring legislative amendment removing the requirement for a signature on provincial voter registration application forms, the path for OVR development was cleared. This new and innovative tool represents a Canadian first for British Columbia. It is the first time that individuals are able to register as voters, or update their current voter record from their home or office computer. Not only is the OVR website fully secure and all information provided by individuals encrypted to ensure that information is not read or intercepted by others, but the service is available 24/7.

In addition to the public version of OVR, a more comprehensive version was developed for use by Elections BC call centre staff and the Service BC - Government Agents acting on our behalf as Deputy District Registrars of Voters. Providing the frontline call centre staff with this system allowed Elections BC to recognize substantial financial and processing efficiencies and diminished workload pressures for the core data processing staff.

The OVR system was initially launched in support of registration activity for the October 28, 2004 Surrey-Panorama Ridge by-election. Although advertisement of the new system was localized and usage by the public minimal, the early launch provided valuable processing and user feedback which allowed Elections BC to identify potential problems and further enhance the system in preparation for the 2005 General Election.

Registration activity preceding the 2005 General Election verified the system to be not only administratively and financially efficient, but also a resounding success with the voters of B.C. Approximately 110,000 OVR transactions occurred from September 14, 2004 to March 31, 2005.

Targeted Voter Registration

In the months preceding the general election, Elections BC undertook a number of activities to improve the coverage and currency of the voters list.

The primary activities were the enhancement of the provincial voters list through use of the NRoE; the development and deployment of Canada's first online voter registration system; a comprehensive registration communications campaign including movie theatre, TV and newspaper advertising, distribution of a province-wide information flyer as well as targeted mailings; and a field enumeration of the residents of extended care facilities and B.C.'s homeless population. Preparations for the enumeration commenced in July of 2004. The enumeration concluded during the election campaign period, which began in fiscal year 2005/06. A full report of enumeration activities will be published in the *Report of the Chief Electoral Officer – 2005 General Election and Referendum on Electoral Reform.*

2005 General Election Preparations

Preparations for British Columbia's 38th general election began during the spring of 2004. Because of amendments to the *Constitution Act* made in August 2001, General Voting Day was fixed for May 17, 2005. The fixed election date had significant impact on Elections BC's preparations for the event, including:

- more efficient procurement and distribution of election material;
- improved District Electoral Officer (DEO) recruitment and training program;
- better staffing plans to meet event needs; and
- superior event planning capability.

In preparation for the election all forms, guides and manuals were reviewed, revised as necessary and printed. District Electoral Officers and their Deputies were appointed and trained. A comprehensive event administration plan was developed and staff contacts were established to ensure that all DEO offices would be well-supported during the event.

Referendum 2005 Preparations

The Citizens' Assembly on Electoral Reform was established by the Government of British Columbia in April 2003 to examine the province's electoral system. Elections BC maintained an ongoing liaison with the Citizens' Assembly for the purpose of giving advice on the administrative and cost implications connected with any alternative electoral system being considered.

The deliberation phase of the work of the Citizens' Assembly began in early September 2004. Assembly members brought together the information they gathered from a learning phase with what British Columbians told them during a subsequent public hearing phase to make their recommendation regarding an electoral process for British Columbia. They narrowed their choice to two systems: a single transferable vote (STV) and a mixed-member proportional (MMP) system. On October 23, 2004, members of the Assembly selected STV over MMP with 123 votes for STV and 31 for MMP. The Assembly then voted to recommend the STV system to the people of British Columbia in a referendum. The Assembly's report was released in December 2004 and sent to all households in British Columbia.

The *Electoral Reform Referendum Regulation* was deposited on February 17, 2005. The Regulation provided the legislative framework for the referendum, designed to be conducted in the same manner as the general election.

Elections BC developed a set of referendum forms and training materials and amended some existing election-related documents to incorporate referendum provisions. In March 2005, referendum-specific training was provided to District Electoral Officers and their Deputies, focusing on the administration of a referendum in conjunction with the 2005 General Election.

Surrey-Panorama Ridge By-election

On May 23, 2004, Gulzar Cheema resigned as the MLA for the electoral district of Surrey-Panorama Ridge, prompting the issue of a writ for a by-election. The writ ordered that the election be held on Thursday, October 28, 2004. By the close of nominations, six candidates had been nominated.

The *Election Act* requires the Chief Electoral Officer to ensure the electoral process is accessible and inclusive. To inform eligible voters in the Surrey-Panorama Ridge by-election of the many registration and voting opportunities available to them, a comprehensive communications strategy was developed.

This included advertising in local newspapers, the distribution of an information flyer to every residential household in the electoral district, a comprehensive website sub-section, the distribution of Where to Vote information cards, and extended hours for a 1-800 call centre. In addition, in September 2004 Elections BC launched online voter registration, the first time this web-based voter registration system was used during an electoral event.

On November 19, 2004, the Chief Electoral Officer certified to the Speaker of the Legislative Assembly the election of Jagrup Brar as the MLA for the electoral district of Surrey-Panorama Ridge.

Electoral Finance

The Electoral Finance and Corporate Services program area of Elections BC is responsible for ensuring compliance with electoral financing law as established in the *Election Act* and *Recall and Initiative Act*. This includes the registration of political parties and constituency associations, the review and audit of the annual financial reports of political parties and constituency associations, and the review of leadership contestants' financing reports.

Every registered political party and registered constituency association must file an annual calendar year financial report with Elections BC by March 31 of the following year. The reports disclose information regarding the assets and liabilities of the entities as well as the sources of revenue and nature of expenditures.

Each report is reviewed to ensure compliance. Identified inaccuracies or errors are discussed with the financial agent and the report is amended. The original reports and all amendments are scanned and posted to the Elections BC website for public access.

During 2004/05, the program area reviewed the annual financial reports of 39 registered political parties and 163 registered constituency associations. In 2004/05, Elections BC also received and reviewed the financial reports related to the leadership contests of four registered political parties.

Electoral Technology Accord

Electoral administrators across Canada are feeling the pressures of new and changing operational requirements, legislative mandates, budget reductions and citizens demanding new or improved services. Evolving roles combined with reduced funding are forcing the transformation of the way many organizations conduct business.

Elections BC is continually searching for ways to improve its business practices to meet these challenges, including creatively leveraging benefits from new and emerging technologies. As well, the sharing of ideas, technical solutions and information management methods with other electoral jurisdictions bears significant potential for reducing public expenditures, increasing administrative efficiencies and improving services to clients.

In the past two years the Chief Electoral Officer has been working closely with the provincial and territorial electoral agencies, as well as Elections Canada, to establish an Electoral Technology Accord (ETA). The ETA is a joint effort by Canadian electoral management bodies to cooperate in the area of information and communication technology.

By March 2005, the Accord had been signed by the Chief Electoral Officer of every province and territory and at the federal level. The CEOs also established an Electoral Technology Accord Working Group to define a data modeling documentation standard, describe key common business areas and create associated data models. The Working Group published a white paper in June 2004, which outlined several strategic actions to move electoral jurisdictions from their current environment of isolated technology solutions to one in which there is a higher degree of collaboration and co-operation.

Performance Reporting

This section reports on accomplishments and performance measure achievements under each goal, in the context of Elections BC's objectives and strategies.

Elections BC's goals, objectives and strategies were substantially modified in the 2004/05 - 2006/07 Service Plan to better reflect the new organizational structure and planning and management framework that was implemented in 2004.

Elections BC established 11 performance measures for 2004/05 to evaluate the organization's performance in its core business areas. Baselines were established for four measures this year. One measure was discontinued (see page 12). Targets were achieved for four of the six remaining measures. Explanations of each measure and its performance target achievements follow.

Goal 1
Excellence in Impartial Electoral Administration

Objective 1: Efficient, effective and impartial service to voters, candidates, and other clients.

Achievements in 2004/05

Elections BC is committed to continuous improvement of client services and ensuring the impartial administration of the electoral process. Providing services to clients in an equitable, timely, efficient and cost-effective manner enhances efficient use of resources and public confidence in the electoral process.

Elections BC devoted considerable attention and resources in 2004/05 to meeting this objective, employing a number of different strategies – one of the most important being the selection and training of staff and election officials with a focus on impartiality and service orientation:

- An improved recruitment process was implemented for the upcoming election.
- District Electoral Officer and Deputy District Electoral Officers were extensively trained to fulfill their demanding and complex administrative role in conducting the election and referendum.
- Training videos and seven role-specific training workbooks were developed for election officials that stressed the importance of impartiality and customer service, and explained how to effectively carry out their particular role in administering the election and referendum.
- Legislative training sessions were provided for permanent and temporary staff to ensure appropriate levels of knowledge and understanding of the *Election Act*.
- An eight-member District Electoral Officer advisory committee was established to provide feedback and input directly to Elections BC regarding training and other issues of concern.

A baseline for the client satisfaction measure set out in the 2004/05 - 2006/07 Service Plan was not established and will not be pursued. Elections BC provides a broad range of services to many different clients. The nature and level of demand for our services vary greatly over a given year. Some client groups, such as candidates, are only active during an election period. As a result, it is not possible to generate a meaningful target and single reporting number that could accurately reflect Elections BC's performance in meeting this objective on a continuing basis.

Although a single reporting number is not available for this measure, a self-assessment of what was achieved towards this objective resulted in a new measure and baseline. The new measure more accurately reflects the cyclical nature of our business and our performance in meeting the objective. Both the new measure and baseline have been established in Elections BC's 2005/06 - 2007/08 Service Plan.

During this past year Elections BC also made great strides in sharing and learning from other electoral agencies. In 2003/04, the Chief Electoral Officer initiated a process of collaboration between the provincial, territorial and federal electoral administration agencies. By June 2004, the Chief Electoral Officers from each of these jurisdictions had signed the Electoral Technology Accord, committing their organizations to continual improvement of the administration of electoral democracy in Canada.

The Accord is a joint effort by Canadian electoral agencies to cooperate in the area of information and communication technology. Given their common responsibilities, the agencies have learned that they can achieve more in less time by working together. The sharing of ideas, technical solutions and information holdings bears significant potential for reducing public expenditures, increasing administrative efficiencies and improving services to the electorate.

In addition, the federal, provincial and territorial electoral jurisdictions established the Canadian Elections Resource Library (CERL), an internal online forum connecting electoral agencies across Canada. The CERL forum exists to promote open dialogue among jurisdictions.

Objective 2: Produce a high quality voters list for use in electoral events.

Achievements in 2004/05

- Conducted targeted voter registration prior to the 2005 provincial general election.
- Researched and implemented new information sources and methods for voter registration and list maintenance.
- Established data sharing agreements with Elections Canada.

Measure	2003/04 Actual	2004/05 Target	2004/05 Actual
Percentage of eligible voters on voters list (coverage)	71%	90%	90%
Percentage of voter records with correct current address (currency)	74%	85%	72%

As the targets were measured prior to the official campaign period of the 2005 General Election, it is possible that the final coverage and currency measurements for that event met or exceeded the targets. Further analysis will be undertaken as part of post-event activities.

Goal 2
Public Awareness and Understanding of the Electoral Process

Objective 1: Citizens of British Columbia are educated on the electoral process.

Achievements in 2004/05

Elections BC provides a broad level of communication and education to inform British Columbians about their electoral rights and the electoral process. Communication and education serve four primary roles: to promote and maintain openness and transparency in the electoral process; to increase knowledge and understanding of the electoral process; to encourage participation in elections; and, to educate clients about requirements of the *Election Act* and other relevant legislation to ensure compliance.

Elections BC's primary strategic tool for delivering information to clients, and for increasing transparency, is its website. The website is continually being improved to make it more functional, accessible and comprehensive. Elections BC's website has proved to be a leading resource for the public, media, students and other clients.

In addition to its website, Elections BC educates the public and provides information through various other channels and vehicles, including advertising, guides and brochures, media relations, outreach, and directly from our knowledgeable staff.

A key indicator of performance in achieving this objective is voters' general knowledge of the electoral process. Just prior to the 2005 General Election campaign period, Elections BC commissioned a survey of 791 eligible voters across British Columbia, establishing a baseline for this measure. Eighty-six percent agreed or strongly agreed that they knew how the electoral process works.

Another tool Elections BC utilizes in its efforts to educate the public is its education kits, which assist teachers in educating students about democratic rights and the electoral process. Educating youth at an early age about voting may lead to more engaged citizens and increased participation.

Every year Elections BC distributes the education kits to teachers of grades 5 and 11 across the province. Teachers are also provided an evaluation form. When asked about the value and importance of the kits, 98% of the teachers responded that the kits were an excellent resource in educating youth on the electoral process.

Measure	2003/04 Actual	2004/05 Target	2004/05 Actual
Percentage of schools using grade 5 and grade 11 education kits	Data not available	Establish benchmark	To be determined
Percentage of positive feedback received via evaluation form from teachers using kits	98%	98%	98%
Voter knowledge on the electoral process	Not available; new measure	Baseline to be established	86% of voters surveyed know how the electoral process works

Objective 2: Timely, accessible and accurate information to the public and other clients.

Effective electoral administration requires that voters, candidates and other clients be aware of the rules of the electoral process. Elections BC ensures various sources of information and resources are available. A client's ability to access information and communicate with Elections BC in a timely and effective manner is largely determined by the number of available access points.

The number of access points needs to increase in relation to voter activity, and investment of resources increases as demand requires it, such as during an electoral event or the annual filing of financial reports by registered political parties and constituency associations. During 2004/05, Elections BC had a base of six access points available to clients.

Achievements in 2004/05

The information and education that Elections BC makes available must be current, accessible and accurate. In 2004/05, this objective was of particular importance in preparation for the 38th general election. As noted earlier, the website is a key strategic tool for communicating timely information to the public and other clients in a cost-effective manner. A number of significant changes and innovations were made to improve the website in 2004/05, including:

- improving access to content to enable people to find information intuitively and quickly;
- implementing online voter registration, thereby enabling voters to register, update or confirm their registration information online through our website 24 hours a day;
- building the election finance online training page for financial agents to quickly obtain information needed to fulfill their duties and responsibilities.

Other channels for providing information to clients included direct communication with Elections BC staff via email, physical mail or telephone.

Staff are provided with the training, tools and resources they need to assist clients effectively and quickly. If enquiry clerks are unable to resolve queries on the spot, our goal is to ensure at least 95% of responses are provided within two working days – a target achieved in 2004/05.

Measure	2003/04 Actual	2004/05 Target	2004/05 Actual
Currency of information on Elections BC's website	Information current within two working days	Information current within two working days	Information current within two working days
Timely responses to the public and other clients	95% of responses provided within two working days	95% of responses provided within two working days	95% of responses provided within two working days

Goal 3
Ensuring the Electoral Process is Accessible and Inclusive

Objective 1: Identify and remove barriers to the electoral process.

Equal access to the electoral process is essential to a healthy democracy.

The *Election Act* provides British Columbians with the most extensive voting opportunities of any jurisdiction in Canada, including provisions directed specifically at facilitating participation in elections by people who face certain challenges. This includes people with disabilities, the elderly, those with English as a second language, and people with low levels of literacy.

Elections BC recognizes the need to go beyond meeting minimum legislative requirements if accessibility is to be achieved. Elections BC is continually reviewing and improving practices, within the existing parameters of the *Election Act*, to ensure the democratic process is accessible and that all voters have the same opportunity to cast their votes.

Achievements in 2004/05

In 2004/05, in preparation for the 38th general election, a number of activities were undertaken to remove barriers to the electoral process, including:

- training District Electoral Officers to effectively select and assign voting areas to voting places. Identifying sufficient and appropriate voting places is the responsibility of the District Electoral Officer;
- training District Electoral Officers on how to assist voters with special needs, such as the use of translators in the voting place and methods to assist voters with visual impairments and other special circumstances. This included a presentation by the Canadian National Institute for the Blind.

To measure Elections BC's performance in identifying and removing barriers to the electoral process, a survey was commissioned to be conducted immediately following the May 17, 2005 General Election. The survey asks British Columbians who voted in the election a series of questions regarding their level of satisfaction with voting accessibility. The results will be used to establish a baseline as of 2005/06.

Measure	2003/04 Actual	2004/05 Target	2004/05 Actual
Percentage of voters satisfied with voting accessibility	N/A	N/A	N/A

Objective 2: Identify and implement measures to enhance the inclusivity of the electoral process.

The right to vote is regarded as one of the most fundamental rights enjoyed by citizens of democracies, yet a significant number of British Columbians do not participate in elections, and certain groups traditionally participate at lower rates than other voters. In the 2001 provincial general election, only 27% of 18-24 year olds turned out to vote, compared with 55% of eligible voters that voted overall.

Achievements in 2004/05

In 2004/05, Elections BC implemented a number of programs and changes to enhance inclusivity and encourage participation in the electoral process:

- Aboriginal, Chinese, Indo-Canadian and youth liaison officers were hired in November 2004 in preparation for the May 17, 2005 General Election. The liaison officers identified barriers and the needs of their respective communities, as well as raised awareness of voting rights and the electoral process.
- The *Election Act* was amended, enabling the homeless to register as voters on the basis that their place of residence is a shelter, hostel or similar institution that provides food, lodging or other social services.
- District Electoral Officers were trained to ensure that election officials and office staff reflected the cultural diversity of their electoral district. Terms and conditions of employment were rewritten, highlighting the need to treat others with respect and dignity.

Elections BC established two measures in the 2004/05 - 2006/07 Service Plan for this objective. In terms of the percentage of eligible youth (18-24 years of age) registered as provincial voters, Elections BC fell short of the 50% target but increased registration of this age group by 100%.

Measure	**2003/04 Actual**	**2004/05 Target**	**2004/05 Actual**
Percentage of voters satisfied with the inclusivity of the electoral process	Baseline to be established	Measure discontinued	N/A
Percentage of eligible youth (18-24 years of age) registered as provincial voters	21%	50%	43%

Our Finances

The Select Standing Committee on Finance and Government Services has responsibility for considering and making recommendations on the budgets of Elections BC.

In November 2004, the Chief Electoral Officer and members of his staff met with the Committee and presented Elections BC's budget requirements for 2005/06, including the funding necessary to administer a targeted enumeration, the 2005 General Election and the Referendum on Electoral Reform.

In its report to the Legislative Assembly in December 2004, the Committee recommended that Election BC's 2005/06 ongoing operating budget be $6,508,000 and the operating budget to administer the three electoral events be $24,998,000, for a total operating budget of $31,506, 000.

The following table compares Elections BC's financial performance in 2004/05 to the approved budget, and provides the approved budget for 2005/06.

Operating Budget – Ongoing and Electoral Events

	2004/05 Budget	2004/05 Actual	Variance	2005/06 Budget
	$	$	$	$
Funding				
Estimates	13,508,000	13,508,000	-	31,506,000
Total Funding	**13,508,000**	**13,508,000**	**-**	**31,506,000**
Expenses				
Salaries of permanent and temporary employees	2,862,540	2,847,285	15,255	1,915,950
Employee benefits	569,146	512,341	56,805	461,474
	3,431,686	3,359,626	72,060	2,377,424
Travel	137,152	84,789	52,363	47,600
Centralized management support services	151,580	233,631	(82,051)	89,960
Professional services	932,563	1,055,178	(122,615)	60,500
Information systems	4,105,739	3,673,882	431,857	1,601,000
Office and business expenses	1,120,751	1,417,551	(296,800)	136,600
Advertising and publications	630,296	1,077,064	(446,768)	5,700
Utilities, supplies, operating equipment and vehicles	3,900	6,178	(2,278)	4,000
Amortization	1,876,892	1,801,597	75,295	1,816,356
Building occupancy	457,498	484,719	(27,221)	363,360
Other expenses (Note 1)	659,943	2,502	657,441	25,003,500
Total Expenses	13,508,000	13,196,717	311,283	31,506,000
Funding Returned	-	311,283		

Note 1: The 'other expenses' budget for 2005/06 includes $24,998,000 for conducting a targeted enumeration, the 2005 General Election and the Referendum on Electoral Reform.

Appendices

Appendix A
Political Party Registration

The following political party registration activities occurred between April 1, 2004 and March 31, 2005. As of March 2005, a total of 44 political parties were registered in B.C.

Political parties that were newly registered

The Bloc British Columbia Party
Emerged Democracy Party of British Columbia
None of the Above Party of BC
The Platinum Party of Employers Who Think and Act to Increase Awareness
Renewal Party of British Columbia
The Sex Party

Registered political party name changes

B.C. Democratic Alliance changed to British Columbia Democratic Coalition, then changed to Democratic Reform B.C.

Registered political parties that were deregistered automatically

All Nations Party of British Columbia for failure to file a supplemental 2003 annual financial report.

Registered political parties that voluntarily deregistered

BC Allegiance Party
None of the Above Party of BC

Appendix B
Constituency Association Registration

The following constituency association registration activities occurred between April 1, 2004 and March 31, 2005. As of March 2005, a total of 163 constituency associations were registered in B.C.

Constituency associations that were newly registered

Cariboo North Constituency Association British Columbia Conservative Party

Kamloops Constituency Association Green Party Political Association of British Columbia

Prince George-Omineca Constituency Association Independent MLA Paul Nettleton

Shuswap Constituency Association British Columbia Conservative Party

Surrey-White Rock Constituency Association British Columbia Conservative Party

Registered constituency associations that were deregistered automatically

The following registered constituency associations were automatically deregistered under section 166 of the *Election Act*, due to the failure of the All Nations Party of British Columbia to file a supplemental 2003 annual financial report.

Cariboo North Constituency Association All Nations Party of British Columbia

Cariboo South Constituency Association All Nations Party of British Columbia

North Coast Constituency Association All Nations Party of British Columbia

Appendix C
Orders of the Chief Electoral Officer

Section 280 of the *Election Act* establishes the authority of the Chief Electoral Officer to make specific or general orders under certain circumstances. Between April 1, 2004 and March 31, 2005, six orders were made by the Chief Electoral Officer.

ORD003-2004
November 10, 2004
A voter's ballot that was enclosed in an incorrectly issued certification envelope was considered on final count in the Surrey-Panorama Ridge electoral district.

ORD001-2005
January 21, 2005
One candidate was granted an extension to file her election financing report for the October 28, 2004 Surrey-Panorama Ridge by-election.

ORD002-2005
March 24, 2005
One registered constituency association was granted an extension to file its annual financial report for the 2004 calendar year.

ORD003-2005
March 24, 2005
One registered constituency association was granted an extension to file its annual financial report for the 2004 calendar year.

ORD004-2005
March 31, 2005
One registered political party was granted an extension to file its annual financial report for the 2004 calendar year.

ORD005-2005
March 31, 2005
One registered constituency association was granted an extension to file its annual financial report for the 2004 calendar year.

Appendix D
Minutes of the Election Advisory Committee

The composition and role of the Election Advisory Committee is established by sections 14 to 16 of the *Election Act*. Section 15(4)(b) of the Act requires the Chief Electoral Officer to include in the Annual Report the minutes of the Committee for meetings during the applicable year.

The Committee consists of the Chief Electoral Officer as chair, two representatives appointed for each registered political party that is represented in the Legislative Assembly, and one representative appointed for each registered political party that had candidates in at least one half of all electoral districts at the immediately preceding general election.

The role of the Committee is to advise the Chief Electoral Officer on the functioning of the *Election Act*, particularly regarding the provisions of the Act that relate to the financing of the political process.

Minutes of the Election Advisory Committee Meeting on April 6, 2004

1:00 p.m.
Office of the Citizens' Assembly on Electoral Reform
#2288 - 555 West Hastings Street, Vancouver, British Columbia

Attending:

Committee Members (alpha by Party):
Green Party: Paul George (attending for Pamela Munroe)
Liberal Party of BC: Kelly Reichert, Cathy Young (attending for R. Hector MacKay-Dunn)
Marijuana Party: Rob Gillespie
New Democratic Party of BC: Gerry Scott, Nicola Hill
Unity Party of BC: Tim Bonner

Elections BC:
Harry Neufeld, Chief Electoral Officer (Chair)
Linda Johnson, Deputy Chief Electoral Officer
Shirley Walker, Planning Officer (Minutes)

Introductions and Administrative Matters:

Harry Neufeld, Chief Electoral Officer, called the meeting to order, welcomed the Committee members and introduced the newly appointed member, Nicola Hill. Administrative matters in relation to the meeting facility and attendees' expenses were reviewed. Mr. Neufeld advised that due to budget constraints, the Vancouver Office of the Ombudsman has been closed and arrangements have been made for the committee to hold some meetings at the Office of the Citizens' Assembly on Electoral Reform.

Agenda Items:

Harry Neufeld provided an overview of the agenda and reminded members that they had been invited to provide feedback on items introduced at the October 16, 2003 meeting regarding electronic voters list data content and nomination and candidate kits.

Voter Participation by Age Group – 2001 General Election:

Harry Neufeld referred to the handout on British Columbia voter participation showing the number of eligible voters, registered voters, and voters who voted. Historical statistics for five provincial elections indicate a steady decline in participation. Only 55% of eligible voters voted in the May 16, 2001 general election. Age group charts emphasized the fact that youth participation is low: 38.3% of the eligible voters age 18 - 24 years participated, while the rate in the 65 - 74 age group was 88.4%. This trend is not unique; across Canada and internationally it is people in higher age groups that tend to register and vote. A further breakdown by electoral district illustrated some differences between urban and rural areas. Charts for three of the 79 districts were provided for comparison and showed that the youth participation rate is slightly higher in rural areas. The members received a CD-ROM disc containing the complete set of data for all electoral districts.

To bridge the gap between the numbers of eligible voters and those who are registered, Elections BC has submitted recommendations for legislative amendments for consideration in the Spring 2004 session. If passed, the changes will have a significant impact on the targeted enumeration process, resulting in an immediate increase of approximately 700,000 voters. They would also influence the ongoing maintenance of the voters list. As a non-partisan office of the legislature, Elections BC believes its role is to eliminate administrative barriers to electoral participation, reaching out to the entire society and focusing on messaging around why voting is important rather than actively pursuing specific groups. Political parties are challenged to promote voter participation generally as well as garner electoral support.

British Columbia electoral law provides eligible voters the ability to register in conjunction with each type of voting opportunity, and 6% of eligible voters used this method in the 2001 election. Elections BC wants to reverse the trend toward registration while voting as it creates line-ups at voting places, increases administrative activity at voting places, and has a direct negative affect on campaign spending limits.

Members received an Internet reference list of articles related to voter participation and were encouraged to review information available at the sites. It was pointed out that research indicates there to be approximately 10% of the Canadian population who reject registration and voting, and are not interested in participating in any electoral process. This means 35% of eligible voters are not participating for other reasons.

Political Party Information on Elections BC Website:

Elections BC wishes to be proactive in supporting increased voter participation and proposes posting political party policy statements on the Elections BC website. This would allow voters to make comparisons and develop informed choices. A draft statement form was provided for the members' feedback. Party participation would be voluntary and the statement (200 words or less) would remain on the website without changes until the general election was completed.

Discussion focused on the number of registered political parties in British Columbia and whether regulations were in place to ensure that parties participated in the electoral process. Linda Johnson advised that there are no restrictions on the number of people required to form a party. Section 168 of the *Election Act* requires the Chief Electoral Officer to deregister a political party if it does not endorse at least two candidates in one of two

consecutive general elections. An exception would be if only one candidate was endorsed, but was elected. As the topic of party registration was not on the agenda, it was agreed that it be given adequate time for discussion at a future meeting.

Members supported the website proposal and Harry Neufeld advised that a letter will be sent to the political party leaders this Fall, inviting them to submit their party's policy statement before January 15, 2005.

Political Party Codes of Conduct:

Harry Neufeld commented that he had received a number of comments from the public recently regarding ethics of political parties. He advised that most were related to the pending federal election but raised his awareness that people expect Elections BC to respond to ethical issues associated with party conduct.

Members were asked to consider whether a code of conduct should be developed in British Columbia. Copies of the Code of Conduct for Political Parties (Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance - IDEA), and the Shared Code of Ethical Conduct for Manitoba's Political Parties were provided for reference.

Questions were raised about the kinds of issues that would fall within a political party code and whether or not there would be sufficient deterrents to regulate activities. It was agreed that District Electoral Officers deal with most issues of this nature during general elections. However, some problems are escalated to Elections BC's senior management and parties need to be contacted for resolution.

Party leaders will be asked to provide to Elections BC, before the 2005 general election, the name of the contact person within their organization who is responsible for resolving ethical complaints. It was agreed that the process of appointing a party contact person should be used and that the possibility of developing a code of conduct could be revisited after the 2005 general election.

Legislative Amendments – Update:

Linda Johnson advised that the amendment to remove the requirement that a general enumeration be conducted in the third calendar year following a general election was approved in the Fall 2003 session. With a fixed election date, a targeted enumeration closer to the event is more effective. To increase the possibility of the critical legislative amendments being addressed in the Spring 2004 session, the list of previously reviewed recommendations needed to be shortened to focus on voter registration. This included using the National Register of Electors (NRoE) for updating voter records and automatically registering new voters, repealing the signature requirement at the time of registration and changing the wording regarding the appointment of District Registrars of Voters to allow District Electoral Officers to perform such duties. If the recommended changes are passed into law, consequential regulatory changes will need to be reviewed by EAC members. The regulation changes are expected to be specifically associated with a redesign of the voter registration application form.

Privacy concerns regarding the use of the NRoE have been addressed in the development of proposed legislation. Information obtained from the NRoE will be flagged and filtered out of the provincial voters list for jury selection purposes. Restricted use of this information will continue until confirmed by the voter or through provincial sources such as the Multiple Address Change program or the MotorVoter program. Section 275 of the *Election Act*

addresses the access to and use of information and, if there is a conflict, that Act overrides the *Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act.*

Questions were raised concerning the various sources that might be used to keep the voters list up to date. Elections BC has explored several options and encountered barriers such as privacy issues around health records and the fact that some sources may include individuals who are not Canadian citizens. It was noted that Quebec has the best access to information with automatic updates from health insurance and drivers licences. However, it took six years to work through the privacy issues before it was implemented.

Harry Neufeld stated that many of the recommended amendments for the Spring 2004 session remain outstanding. Instead of including recommendations for legislative amendments in future CEO election reports, he proposed preparing a special separate report for legislative amendments which would include the EAC members' signatures. Members expressed concern that amendments previously endorsed by the EAC have not gone forward. Linda Johnson explained that it is extremely difficult to have legislation introduced; the session time is limited and there is ministry competition and government priorities. A suggestion was made to review the items not scheduled for the Spring session and incorporate some into the Fall 2004 session. Linda Johnson advised that it takes considerable time to prepare draft legislation and obtain all the necessary approvals, and it would be too late for Elections BC and the parties to deal with changes potentially finalized less than six months before the election. The printing of forms and guides must be completed well before packing the election supply kits starts in the Fall.

Policy Review – Voters List Data Content:

Elections BC recognizes that file format changes may affect the parties' existing list processing programs, and the addition of new information could violate provincial privacy guidelines. At the October 16, 2003 meeting, members were asked to submit suggestions for changes to the content and structure of the electronic voters list. There were no formal written responses received. Harry Neufeld advised that a potential privacy issue exists with the Voter ID, item #3 on the handout. This 'key' information is considered confidential at the federal level and its use will have to be addressed to meet legal requirements surrounding access to NRoE data. Members were asked if they use this number or issue their own unique key. Feedback was requested on how a data format change would affect them and what fields are required. Consensus was that the identifier (voter ID#) is not reliable as it does not remain the same, while the mailing address fields were necessary and should be kept. Elections BC welcomes EAC input and will have a proposed final data format available for the next meeting.

Review of Content – Nomination Kits, Candidate Kits:

To ensure that the contents of these kits are providing value, Linda Johnson discussed the issues raised at the last meeting and asked members to provide feedback on any required changes. Handouts describing the contents of each kit were provided.

The nomination kit will remain the same as all items are required by law. The format, rather than content, of the nomination booklet will be changed to letter size to allow more room for instructions, easier photocopying, and better alignment on the website. Members requested comprehensive guidelines for the Statement of Disclosure form. Elections BC does not administer this legislation. However, a request will be made to the Disclosure Clerk's office to expand on the high-level instructions they provided for the last election.

nomination kits have a broad distribution, including District Electoral Officers, Government Agents, and political parties. The parties will receive bulk kits in the Fall.

The candidate kits are tailored to each electoral district. Elections BC recognizes that they are of value to candidates, and will continue to provide them. As a supplement to items that were previously provided, a Guide to Candidates will be included in addition to the one provided in the nomination kit. Financing forms are sent directly to financial agents, and are not included in the kits. If EAC members have any suggestions regarding kit contents, their input is welcome.

Voting Area Redistribution:

A handout containing background information was provided to the members. Linda Johnson clarified the difference between redistribution of the 79 Electoral District boundaries which is determined by an Electoral Boundaries Commission after every second general election (due following the May 2005 election), and redistribution of the 8,462 voting areas for which Elections BC is administratively responsible. Section 80 of the *Election Act* requires that each voting area contain no more than 400 registered voters, unless the CEO determines that a larger number will facilitate conduct of the vote.

Voting areas are the key administrative element used for election planning and event administration. Redistribution is expensive, time consuming, and impacts party strategies when maps have to be physically redrawn. Elections BC has evaluated existing voting area populations and has calculated the projected number of voters based on empty addresses and population density. There are a large number of voting areas with projected populations between 400 and 800. To minimize the cost and impact of redistribution, these voting areas will be not be redrawn. Instead, an administrative "alpha split" (A-L, M-Z) will be applied to the voters list to create two ballot boxes/voting stations for each of these voting areas. This does not affect results reporting. For approximately 200 voting areas where potential voter populations exceed 800, redistribution will be necessary. Elections BC will determine whether an isolated address can be designated as a separate "point VA" (single address voting area within a larger geographic voting area) or if the maps will have to be redrawn. To minimize renumbering, on the new maps new voting areas will have a sequential code assigned to the original voting area number. Voting results will be reported separately for each newly created voting area.

The District Electoral Officers are currently reviewing special voting areas such as long-term care facilities, and accessibility issues including new developments and geographic concerns. This on-the-ground knowledge will help determine what map boundaries will have to be redrawn. The scope and timing of the redistribution is being determined now and the parties will be provided with details before the maps are distributed in late Fall.

The 2001 electoral district maps are in PDF format on the website and can be used by commercial printers to produce the same quality product as provided by Elections BC.

Other Business:

Questions were raised about the possibility of a referendum, the type of model that would be used, and the role of Elections BC. Linda Johnson advised that the Citizens' Assembly on Electoral Reform will include the wording for a ballot in their final report if a new electoral system is recommended. Elections BC is preparing a discussion paper for government, raising such issues as voting methodology, legislation and enabling regulations, public policy

regarding possible regulation of yes/no groups, and the need for voter education prior to the referendum.

Next Meeting:

The next meeting will be scheduled for mid- to late June 2004, depending upon whether the legislation is passed in the Spring session. Proposed changes to the voter registration form and formatting changes to electronic voters list data content will be on the agenda.

Minutes of the Election Advisory Committee on September 24, 2004

1:30 p.m.
Office of the Citizens' Assembly on Electoral Reform
#2288 - 555 West Hastings Street, Vancouver, British Columbia

Attending:

Committee Members (alpha by Party):
Green Party: Pamela Munroe
Liberal Party of BC: Kelly Reichert, Cathy Young (attending for R. Hector MacKay-Dunn)
New Democratic Party of BC: Nicola Hill, Leslie Kerr (attending for Gerry Scott)

Elections BC:
Harry Neufeld, Chief Electoral Officer (Chair)
Linda Johnson, Deputy Chief Electoral Officer
Linda Shout, Executive Coordinator (Minutes)

On-line Voter Registration:

Linda Johnson announced that Elections BC's new Online Voter Registration (OVR) system went live on Monday, September 20th. This online system, which allows eligible British Columbians to register as a voter, or confirm or update their voter record, is the first of its kind employed in a comparable jurisdiction anywhere in North America. OVR was made possible by changes to the *Election Act* that removed the signature requirement from a voter registration application. A related regulation requires individuals using the online system to provide either the last six digits of their Social Insurance Number or their driver's licence number. If individuals do not wish to disclose this information, they may register by mailing or faxing a downloadable registration form to Elections BC.

There has not yet been extensive advertising regarding OVR, and statistics on the use of the system since its implementation are not yet available. However, an advertisement has been placed in newspapers in the Surrey-Panorama Ridge electoral district in anticipation of the by-election.

The public will be gradually made aware of the availability of the online system. Starting this semester, university calendars will feature an ad promoting OVR. It is expected that an easily accessible, online registration system will be particularly attractive to younger voters. A high-profile campaign to promote OVR will be launched in January as part of Elections BC's targeted enumeration process leading up to the May 17 general election. This Fall, the system will be monitored and fine-tuned based on input received from various sources.

Linda Johnson noted that Elections BC would appreciate feedback from Election Advisory Committee members regarding the online voter registration system. Some Committee members reported that they had visited the site already. One member noted that the final screen of a registration transaction seemed to imply that the user would be contacted regarding a confirmation of their new or changed registration. In fact, it is not possible to instantly confirm a voter's information, as some time is required to allow verification of the information provided. Elections BC will ensure the language regarding confirmation does not imply a response.

Election Advisory Committee members were encouraged to provide Elections BC with their comments, concerns and suggestions regarding OVR, and to create a link on their parties' websites to the OVR system.

Election Advisory Committee members noted their general support for the introduction of the OVR system.

A question was raised regarding the lack of signature requirement, and the impact this will have on recall and initiative campaigns (the signatures provided on application forms have been used to verify the signatures on recall and initiative petitions). Linda Johnson noted that Elections BC advised government of this impact, and government was aware of this when the change to the *Election Act* was made. Elections BC's perspective is that the use of signatures is not the best way to verify petitions. Research has been conducted into validation methods used in other jurisdictions, and Elections BC will make a recommendation to government on the best way to proceed on this issue.

Regarding voter registration, one Committee member raised the issue of pre-registration of 16 and 17 year olds so that they will automatically be registered when they turn 18. This idea will be reconsidered by Elections BC in legislative recommendations developed with the Election Advisory Committee following the 2005 general election.

Finally, Linda Johnson noted that, as registration closes at the end of Day 7 of the election period, OVR will be unavailable after that point during the general election. Voters will be advised, if they try to access the system, of other options for registration in conjunction with voting. During the Surrey-Panorama Ridge by-election, OVR will not be shut off for all electoral districts, but a message will be provided warning Surrey-Panorama Ridge residents that if they attempt to register after Day 7, their registration will not be processed until after the by-election and they will be required to register at a voting opportunity.

Voters List Provided During Election – Printed, Electronic:

Harry Neufeld noted that the formats of printed lists provided to political parties were created in the early 1980s, and that these formats may no longer be appropriate for current usage. He noted that political party requests for voters lists, which may be made at any time, are usually for electronic rather than printed lists. A number of different formats may be produced, but during an election the legislation sets out rules for the format and numbers of copies of lists that must be produced and the timeframe for producing them.

Examples of the printed list formats used during an election were distributed. These lists were created with scrambled name and address information in consideration of privacy concerns.

During an election, two lists are produced, in both written and electronic formats: the preliminary list, produced on Day 0 (Writ Day) and the revised list, which reflects

registrations completed until the close of registration on Day 7. Revised lists are pre-checked for duplicates, produced on Day 14, and delivered to District Electoral Officers on Day 15 or 16.

Samples of the printed lists were reviewed by Committee members:

#1 Preliminary "voting area geo alpha" list, containing all names within each voting area, sorted in geographic order. This list was formerly used by political parties for campaigning, but fewer and fewer candidates use it now. These lists are printed, but rarely claimed by the candidates. The *Election Act* states that two printed copies and an electronic copy of the preliminary list must be provided to candidates, and specifies that the list must be divided by voting area. The Act does not specify whether the list should be in geo- or alpha- order within a voting area.

#2 Revised "voting area alpha" list containing an alphabetical sorting of voters within each voting area. This list also contains a sequence number beside each voter's name. The Act states that a sequence number must appear on the revised version of the list. This number is useful for scrutineers, as the number (as well as the voter's name) is called out in the voting place, allowing scrutineers to check for the voter against their list of supporters. Harry Neufeld noted that this sequence number is only applied for one election, and does not remain with the voter for future electoral events.

#3 Several pages of the general "voting book", used by voting officials on election day, in the same sort order as the "voting area alpha" list containing the voter sequence number. The voting book also contains instructions for voting officials. The book is signed by the voter in the space corresponding to their name before they may receive a ballot, and an X is placed in the box to the left of their name.

#4a Preliminary and revised (#4b) "electoral district alpha" lists are versions of the voters list not required by legislation to be provided to candidates, but have been made available on request in past elections. These lists are preliminary and revised versions of an alphabetical listing of all voters within an entire electoral district. In the revised version, the voter sequence number appears on the far right. This number is not unique within this list – it corresponds to the voter's sequence number on the revised "voting area alpha" and "voting book" list for their particular voting area.

A question was raised regarding the provision of sequence numbers on the preliminary list. Assigning this number on the preliminary list would not have value, as the list changes between Day 0 and Day 7, when new registrants may be added. The sequence number is therefore only applied after the close of registration. This is different from what is done in other jurisdictions such as Ontario, where permanent sequence numbers are assigned to voters on the preliminary list, and registrants added after close of registration receive a different, unique sequence number (essentially producing different list sections).

Harry Neufeld asked Committee members to comment on whether list #1 (the preliminary "geo-alpha" list) is still useful, and if so, whether the list should be sorted geo-alpha or simply alphabetically. The *Election Act* requires Elections BC to print two paper copies of this list by voting area (could be a geo-alpha or alpha sort) for each candidate, and must print up to eight more copies upon request. Committee members agreed that this geo-sorted preliminary list no longer sees wide usage, and agreed to work with Elections BC to ensure that a minimal number of lists need to be printed. Moreover, Committee members confirmed that revised lists are used more frequently, and agreed to avoid requesting printed

lists and instead make better use of electronic lists. Electronic lists are of more value to candidates in any case, as the electronic format allows them to perform their own sorting of the data.

A question was raised regarding changing the legislation so that printed copies of the lists are not required. This matter will be revisited following the general election. However, for the upcoming general election, Elections BC will print and store the required two copies of the printed list at the district electoral office, who will supply them to candidates on request. The preliminary printed list will remain in geo-alpha sort format, by voting area. Committee members agreed that Elections BC could advise District Electoral Officers to encourage candidates to accept electronic versions of the list rather than paper copies.

Changes to the Electronic Format of Voters Lists:

The Election Advisory Committee had been consulted regarding proposed changes to the electronic format of voters lists. This issue will be revisited following the 2005 general election, as the overall format also has not been changed for many years although significant administrative changes have been made. One such change is that Elections BC is no longer issuing voter registration cards containing a pre-printed number and applying that number to records in its computer system.

In addition, British Columbia is about to merge data from the federal voters list into the provincial list, resulting in the addition of 650,000 to 700,000 voters to the list. Elections BC will not have registration forms for these individuals. The federal Privacy Commissioner has determined that the "key" (the registration number in the federal computer system that corresponds to a particular voter) must be kept private. The provincial Privacy Commissioner, who Elections BC consulted regarding the provision of the voter card number on the voters lists provided to parties, was also adamant that it is not appropriate to make the numeric key available.

The voter sequence number has, however, been added to the electronic list in field #3 (on the revised electronic list version only; the field will remain blank on the preliminary list version as the sequence number is not created until the revised list is produced).

Committee members agreed to the changed format of the electronic lists.

Update – Voting Area Redistribution:

Election Advisory Committee members were advised at a previous meeting that a review of voting area boundaries across the province was underway. The *Election Act* requires voting areas to contain no more than 400 voters (unless the Chief Electoral Officer directs otherwise). Changes to voting area boundaries should be completed, gazetted, and posted to the Elections BC website by the end of October. Voting area boundaries for the Surrey-Panorama Ridge electoral district have been completed, and voting area maps, street indexes and a conversion table (comparing 2001 and 2004 voting areas) are currently available on the Elections BC website.

Committee members were given a spreadsheet comparing provincial voting areas from the last provincial election with projected voting areas for the 2005 election. There will be 309 more voting areas at the end of redistribution than during the 2001 election. However, there are some voting areas that may have more than 500 or even 750 voters where an "alpha split" could be applied. This denotes a situation where the voters list is split within a voting

area into two voting books, divided at a logical place alphabetically based on the names on the list. Although this would mean two sets of voting officials and two ballot boxes in the same voting location, there would be one total of voting results for that voting area reported in the Statement of Votes. Adopting the alpha split approach is simpler and more cost-effective than creating a new voting area boundary in some cases. There are 350 voting areas where the anticipated population of more than 500 voters may require two or even three alpha splits.

It was noted that "alpha splits" refers to an administrative process, while "redistribution" refers to the process, required by legislation, of reviewing and changing voting area boundaries.

The maps created by Elections BC are the only graphic depictions of voting area boundaries. A question was raised regarding the provision of electronic "base map" information to political parties. The base map layers components such as physical geography, political boundaries, and other major features. Additional layers, such as roads and address ranges, are applied and maintained. Information for these layers is proprietary, as the information comes from data sources outside of government. For this reason, Elections BC's base map information may not be provided to parties due to the proprietary nature of some of the information components. Base map information used by Elections BC may be available for licensed use from a commercial source, and Elections BC will investigate this further for Election Advisory Committee members.

Committee members were notified that while the new voting area boundaries will be changed and gazetted, and maps made available for download and printing from the Elections BC website by the end of October, updates of new address and street information will not yet be on the map as this information is still in the process of being collected and applied. Maps available for download on the Elections BC website will be flagged as "interim", and this flag will be removed when the updated map is available. The full set of up-to-date maps, including all the new streets and subdivisions Elections BC has information on, will be available in January 2005. These maps, in printed form, will be included in candidate kits prepared for each electoral district.

Committee members were advised that Elections BC will begin charging for map orders. Budget restrictions limit Elections BC's ability to provide maps for free, except for inclusion in candidate kits. Committee members were given a draft pricing schedule, and were reminded that maps may oe downloaded from the Elections BC website and printed by a local print shop at potentially lower cost.

Voting Place Selection Review:

Following voting area boundary redistribution, the assignment of voting areas to voting places must be reviewed. District Electoral Officers (DEOs) will be asked this Fall to analyze the new voting area configuration and link voting areas with voting places, and will be scouting potential new sites as well as evaluating those used in the past. Committee members were provided with a draft letter that will be sent to all MLAs and political party contacts to solicit their comments regarding voting place assignments and locations. Feedback is to be provided to the Chief Electoral Officer by October 31st. Information will be collated centrally and provided to the appropriate DEOs to consider as they select voting places.

Election Advisory Committee members supported this approach. A question was raised regarding a mechanism for consultation once a DEO has confirmed a voting place location. Voting place locations are not made public until during the election period, and it is important that DEO decisions regarding voting place location be made in a clearly independent manner. However, when choosing voting place locations DEOs consider factors such as proximity to public transportation, good parking facilities, and accessibility for physically challenged voters. If political parties are aware of good potential voting places that have not been used before, or of places used that have been unsatisfactory, they are encouraged to provide this information to the Chief Electoral Officer.

Standing Nomination Process:

Committee members received a copy of a draft letter that will be sent to all political parties encouraging the use of the standing nomination process for the upcoming general election. There are significant advantages for political parties to use this process: it facilitates the confirmation of party candidates, ensures candidate names are spelled correctly, and provides more time for a thorough review and confirmation by Elections BC that all necessary documentation has been received and reviewed. A sample nomination kit will be enclosed with the letter, which will be copied to party leaders.

Elections BC intends to post standing nominations on its website as of mid-January 2005 so the public may view them for each political party.

Committee members were reminded that the Solemn Declaration of Qualification and Statement of Disclosure forms still need to be submitted between Day 0 and Day 5 under the standing nomination process. All other paperwork may be completed before Day 0.

The required nomination forms are available on the Elections BC website, but in their physical version some are multi-part forms that allow for retention of copies. The nomination booklet has been recently updated and improved. The new booklet is in a standard, 8.5" x 11" format, with perforated pages and more detailed instructions. The Nomination Guide and Guide for Candidates have also been updated to reflect changes to legislation. Committee members were advised to inform their parties to destroy any old nomination kits they have in stock, as new kits will soon be available.

A question was raised regarding the availability of the candidate endorsement form – a form signed by two principal officers of a political party that authorizes a candidate to use the party name on the ballot. This form is not currently available online, but is typically sent out pre-writ to each party.

Innovations for the Surrey-Panorama Ridge By-election:

Linda Johnson updated Committee members on a number of legislative, technological and procedural innovations in place for the Surrey-Panorama Ridge by-election. The online voter registration system has been launched and promoted in the electoral district. "Where to Vote" (WTV) cards will be sent to "empty" addresses where there are not currently any registered voters, advising those residents of voter qualifications and where to vote. Traditionally, WTV cards have only been sent to registered voters once the revised list is produced. However, non-registered potential voters were not being contacted. It is hoped that this innovation will provide effective communication with unregistered voters, motivating them to participate in the election.

Another innovation is the use of email in the District Electoral Officer's office. This should improve the speed and effectiveness of internal communications. In addition, most advertising will now be placed by the Chief Electoral Office rather than the DEO. DEO office locations, financial agent information and so on will be published in ads developed by Elections BC. Furthermore, recent legislative changes allow DEOs to also be appointed as District Registrars of Voters. This facilitates a "one-stop shopping" approach to voter registration and candidate services.

Legislative changes now permit Elections BC to merge information from the federal voters list (National Register of Electors) with the provincial voters list, resulting in a more complete and up-to-date voters list. The data merge will improve the provincial voters list dramatically and, combined with Elections BC's targeted enumeration campaign, eliminate the need for registration centres. However, this merge will not be completed in time for the by-election. Therefore, the Surrey-Panorama Ridge by-election will be the last election to feature registration centres. In addition, enumeration will be undertaken in two Special Voting Areas (locations such as long-term care facilities) in that electoral district to ensure mobility-challenged voters are well-served.

Finally, the new *Election Act* rules will apply to this by-election, so a signature will no longer be required for voter registration, and expanded residency rules will apply for those voters without permanent housing.

By-elections present an excellent opportunity to see how new legislation rules apply and make refinements in service delivery. They also pose a training opportunity for staff and election officials. Linda Johnson noted that, as there was a vacancy in the DEO role for Surrey-Panorama Ridge, the DEO in a neighbouring district was assigned (Hank Pulles of Surrey-Green Timbers, a very seasoned and experienced DEO).

Other Business:

Provision of Shape Files for Voting Areas:
In the past, some political parties have been provided with the "shape files" for voting areas (digital files depicting voting area boundaries). However, as a result of budget constraints, Elections BC has discontinued providing the shape files. The voting area maps produced by Elections BC are the only legal definitions of the boundaries. This is different from electoral district boundaries, which are defined by metes and bounds set out in legislation. The digital files of boundaries Elections BC produces may be problematic for political parties if they are using a different projection from the base map Elections BC uses (e.g. boundaries may overlap into adjoining voting areas). Elections BC does not have the resources to technically support political parties and candidates making use of the shape files in Geographic Information Systems.

Committee members suggested the files could be made available once voting area boundary mapping is completed, with the proviso that Elections BC will not provide support for parties' use of the files. Harry Neufeld agreed to discuss this with the Elections BC's Director of Geographic and Voter Data Services and report back to Committee members at the next meeting.

Next Meeting:

One more Election Advisory Committee meeting will take place before the general election – likely in January. A review of the Surrey-Panorama Ridge by-election will be on the agenda.

Minutes of the Election Advisory Committee on January 28, 2005

10:00 p.m.
The Fairmont Waterfront Hotel
900 Canada Place Way, Vancouver, British Columbia

Attending:

Committee Members (alpha by Party):
Green Party: Paul George
Liberal Party of BC: Kelly Reichert, R. Hector MacKay-Dunn
Marijuana Party: Kirk Tousaw
New Democratic Party of BC: Nicola Hill, Leslie Kerr (substituting for Gerry Scott)

Elections BC:
Harry Neufeld, Chief Electoral Officer (Chair)
Linda Johnson, Deputy Chief Electoral Officer
Nola Western, Director, Electoral Finance
Linda Shout, Executive Coordinator (Minutes)

Introductions and Administrative Matters:

Meeting attendees introduced themselves. Kirk Tousaw introduced himself as the recently appointed representative from the BC Marijuana Party, replacing Rob Gillespie. It was noted that the Democratic Reform Party of BC had been advised of its entitlement to have two members present at the meeting.

In-Person versus Email Consultation: Hector MacKay-Dunn noted his concern that consultation with the Committee should take place in person whenever possible rather than through email consultation. Members agreed that in-person meetings allow for the greatest exchange of viewpoints. However, the previous email consultation occurred on a matter discussed at two earlier committee meetings (the early implementation of changes to the *Election Act* for the purposes of testing them in the Surrey-Panorama Ridge by-election). In such a situation, members agreed that email consultation is practical and less costly.

Changes to Electoral Finance Rules Since 2001:

Nola Western reported that there have been no changes to electoral finance rules since 2002, so committee members may already be well aware of the changes that were passed in the fall of 2002. She noted, however, that the parties' candidates and campaign workers may not be fully aware of the changes to the law.

Survey Methodology; Advertising Expense Limits: Sections of the *Election Act* requiring the publication of election opinion survey methodology were repealed. As well, there is no longer an advertising expense limit for third-party advertisers. Election advertising sponsors must still register, identify themselves on their advertising, and report on their expenditures following an election.

Political Contributions by Charitable Organizations: Charitable organizations may not make political contributions. Nola Western explained that the definition of "charitable organization" refers to organizations formed for the relief of poverty; advancement of religion or education; protection of health; governmental or municipal purposes or other

purposes beneficial to the community. This definition, referred to by Attorney General Geoff Plant in the Hansard record, is broad and is not restricted to those charitable organizations registered for income tax purposes.

Volunteers: There has also been a change to the definition of "volunteer." This change has been in effect only since the Fall of 2002, so may be new to some candidates and their supporters. A volunteer is defined as an individual who volunteers their services and does not receive any compensation, directly or indirectly, in relation to the services or the time spent providing them. Employers may not pay an individual while they are "volunteering" their time to a political campaign. Employees on holiday who are volunteering for a campaign may continue to be paid, but the employer must not give them extra holiday time in order to "volunteer" for a campaign. Political party and candidate financial agents are responsible for ensuring volunteers are aware of this rule. To avoid an unwitting contravention, parties could consider having volunteers sign a document stating that they are not receiving compensation, directly or indirectly, for their voluntary work for the campaign.

Independent Sponsors: A question was raised regarding the provisions in the Act to ensure independent advertising sponsors are truly independent. Nola Western noted that, although the section heading (s. 244) refers to "independent sponsors," this term is not used in the section text. Advertising sponsors are required to make a solemn declaration that they do not intend to sponsor election advertising to circumvent a candidate's or political party's election expenses limit. If a situation comes to the attention of Elections BC via complaints or media reports, Elections BC will consider conducting an investigation. The courts would have to decide whether collusion actually occurred. Few complaints in this regard have been received by Elections BC.

Nola Western noted, in response to a question, that letters sent by organizations encouraging their members to join a political party or otherwise support a particular party would be considered third-party advertising if received during the campaign period.

Members were reminded that political contributions can only be made to a financial agent or someone authorized in writing by the financial agent to receive contributions. The Act is very prescriptive on this matter.

Members discussed the impact of fixed election dates on the timing of party activities (for example, a mailout *delivered* before writs are issued and therefore outside of the campaign period would not be subject to election expenses limits). It was agreed that the committee should review this matter following the next election.

Update on Previous Chief Electoral Officer (CEO) Recommendations: There has been no progress on a number of recommendations previously made by the CEO for legislative change regarding electoral finance rules. Nola Western briefly outlined those recommendations and reiterated that they have not been adopted.

- Deputy Financial Agents still cannot file election financing reports. They may only receive political contributions and issue tax receipts. In the case of registered constituency associations and candidates, the financial agent of the registered political party can file election financing reports on their behalf.
- Political contributions over the amount of $100 still cannot be made by debit card or by credit card contributions over the telephone or internet. A signed document is required, such as a cheque, money order or signed credit card slip.

- Campaign workers cannot pay for election expenses and then be reimbursed by the financial agent. Only the financial agent or a person authorized by the financial agent may pay for election expenses, and such expenses must be paid for from funds of the election campaign or political party.
- An authorization statement is still required on all election advertising, including buttons, t-shirts and bumper stickers. Statements must include the name of the financial agent of the candidate. Generic signs or other items that don't identify a candidate or electoral district are not required to specify the candidate's financial agent but must identify the political party's financial agent.

There are a number of other recommendations for legislative change made by the Chief Electoral Officer following the 1996 and 2001 general elections that have not been acted on by government. Following the 2005 general election, the Committee will discuss a strategy to raise the profile of these and future recommendations.

Standing Nominations:

A letter from Harry Neufeld regarding the standing nomination process was sent to all registered political parties on October 1st, 2004. So far, only one standing nomination has been received. Harry Neufeld encouraged Committee members to promote standing nominations for their parties. The nomination documents are complex and detailed in their requirements, and parties can assist nominees with completing their paperwork fully and correctly.

Members agreed that nominee names, political party affiliation and respective electoral districts should be posted to the Elections BC website on a regular basis, as they are processed. This will assist parties to quickly reference the status of standing nominations for their party. As well, such publication is consistent with the requirement that standing nomination documents be made available for public inspection (s. 59 of the Act).

Committee members were reminded to destroy any old nomination kits and only use the new ones. To distinguish them, the current nomination booklet in the new kit is 8.5" x 11" with tear-out pages to facilitate copying of documentation.

Financial agents may open a bank account any time, and aren't required to wait until nomination papers are filed. However, tax receipts cannot be issued until the candidate receives their Certificate of Candidacy. Two documents complete the standing nomination process: the disclosure required by the *Financial Disclosure Act* and a solemn declaration that the nominee is qualified to be nominated. These documents must be filed between Day 0 (April 19, 2005) and 4:30 p.m. Pacific time on Monday, April 25, 2005. The Chief Electoral Office commits to processing these final two documents promptly and issuing the Certificate of Candidacy containing the candidate number required for tax receipt purposes as quickly as possible.

Political Party Endorsement of Candidates:

Committee members were provided a sample copy of the two-sided "Endorsement of Candidates by Registered Political Party" form. This form can be used to endorse up to the maximum 79 candidates. It must be received at the Chief Electoral Office by 1:00 p.m. Pacific time on Day 15 (Wednesday, May 4, 2005). Committee members were asked to ensure that the forms are carefully checked to ensure that candidates are matched with their correct electoral district and that all candidate names are spelled correctly.

A party may withdraw its endorsement of a candidate by writing to the Chief Electoral Officer before the close of the nomination period. The letter must be signed by two principal officers of the party currently on record with Elections BC.

Committee members were reminded that if a party does not endorse a candidate, that individual is still a candidate. A candidate may also choose not to represent a party that has endorsed them by notifying the Chief Electoral Officer in writing before the close of nominations that they are dropping their party affiliation. Such an individual would also continue to be a candidate. A letter will be sent to all registered political parties shortly after the writs are issued to remind them of the endorsement deadline.

Elections BC's General Election Website:

Committee members were provided an early draft of three pages of the Elections BC General Election website. The Elections BC home page will be modified to provide links to components of the General Election website containing information on voter registration, the general election and the referendum on electoral reform. There will be further menu selections including information on voting opportunities, an unofficial list of candidates, and a tool for voters to determine their electoral district. A media tool kit will also be available containing statistics and news releases. The regular Elections BC website menus will continue to be available.

Political Party Platform Statements:

Linda Shout referred to a letter sent to all registered political parties by Harry Neufeld on December 21st, inviting them to submit their political party platform for posting to the Elections BC website. To date, five parties have submitted a statement. A total of 12 parties responded to the letter indicating their intent to submit one. The deadline for submission of statements is Monday, January 31, 2005.

Linda Johnson reported that the idea of placing brief political party statements on the Elections BC website was received favourably at a recent meeting of academics she attended. In their view, provided Elections BC extends the opportunity to all parties and it is framed in a neutral manner on the website, this is an appropriate activity. Furthermore, many members of the public expect to find this information on electoral administration websites.

A concern was raised by Hector MacKay-Dunn regarding placing political party platform information on the Elections BC website. He stated that it was his personal view that Elections BC must operate as a neutral administrative body independent of the government, and for this reason political statements should not be housed on the Elections BC website nor should the site become a communication link for political parties. Members of the public may contact parties directly or otherwise do their own research to find out more about political party policies. As well, he expressed concern that it was not possible to provide enough information within the 200 word limit for useful comparative purposes.

Harry Neufeld noted that this matter was discussed during the April 6, 2004 meeting of the Election Advisory Committee. Members had agreed at that meeting that posting this information could help increase voter participation, particularly amongst web-savvy youth, by providing comparative information in one convenient location. Other Committee members agreed that 200 words was adequate to provide a succinct introduction to party policy, inviting interested individuals to follow up with a visit to the party's website to learn more.

At the request of Committee member Hector MacKay-Dunn, Harry Neufeld agreed to seek an independent legal opinion on whether Elections BC's mandate to provide public information includes the provision of political party statements.

The remaining Committee members did not oppose the posting of political party information to the Elections BC website and requested a report on the amount of traffic this page receives, as well as any feedback Elections BC receives regarding the posting of political party information.

Update on Referendum on Electoral Reform:

The referendum on electoral reform will be held in conjunction with the general election on May 17, 2005. Procedural information regarding the conduct of the referendum will be contained in the referendum regulations which are still in draft form. The Committee will not be consulted regarding these regulations as they are Cabinet regulations, not regulations of the Chief Electoral Officer. However, Linda Johnson has been consulted regarding the regulations and provided some information to Committee members.

- The methodology will mirror that of the general election. Qualifications to vote will be the same; there will be the same voting opportunities and the calendar will be identical.
- Separate ballots will be issued for the election and referendum, and the security screen on the back of the ballots will be a different colour to distinguish the ballots when folded.
- One ballot box will be used for both ballots, and ballots will be separated at close of voting for counting purposes.
- If a voter declines either a referendum ballot or an election ballot, a notation will be made in the voting book to allow reconciliation of ballots.
- Voters who vote absentee will also receive two ballots, both of which will be placed in one secrecy envelope inside one certification envelope. These ballots will be considered at final count.
- Election ballots will be counted first, followed by referendum ballots, at both initial and final counts. Election results will be announced to the media as soon as they are known by District Electoral Officers (DEOs). The referendum results will therefore be reported later than the election results. The results released on election night are preliminary only.
- The threshold required for the referendum to pass is based on a combination of electoral district results and province-wide results. There must be 60% of valid votes province-wide in favour of the referendum question as well as a simple majority in 60% (48) of electoral districts.
- Candidate scrutineers may be present during the referendum ballot count (but may leave if they wish once the candidate ballots are counted). It has not been decided whether candidate scrutineers will have any standing to object during the counting of referendum ballots.
- It has been suggested that there be a parallel scheme for referendum advertisers as for election advertisers. There will likely be the same disclosure and reporting process. Referendum advertisers will need to be registered.
- It is not known if there will be yes/no group regulation. Gordon Gibson recommended that there be no regulation of yes/no groups.

Regulations are expected to be completed within the next two weeks. The referendum process should be very seamless and easy for voters.

Provision of Referendum Information to the Public: Citizens' Assembly reports are currently being delivered to households province-wide. Committee members were provided with a mockup of a householder that Elections BC will be sending mid-February notifying B.C. residents of the upcoming general election and referendum.

A Referendum Information Office, administered through the Ministry of Attorney General, will be established and a Director has been appointed. The Referendum Information Office is responsible for education about the issues voters must consider before voting on the referendum question. Elections BC will only provide information on the mechanics of how the referendum will be conducted, such as what the ballot will look like, how ballots will be counted, and how the 'super-majority' will be determined.

The Referendum Information Office hopes to have a website functioning in February, with a call centre set up and circular distributed to households in March. The Elections BC website will contain a link to the Referendum Information Office site and vice versa. Both sites will carry a link to the Citizens' Assembly site. The Citizens' Assembly site will not be updated any further as the Citizens' Assembly office has shut down following completion of its work. It is expected that copies of the Citizens' Assembly report will be available at all voting opportunities, but voting officials will be instructed not to provide any information on the referendum issue.

Access to Shape and Base Map Files:

Shape files for all provincial electoral districts and voting areas have been placed on the Elections BC website. The shape files can be used with digital base map information parties currently use. At a previous Committee meeting, Elections BC was asked for more information about the base it uses and if that base may be provided to political parties. Harry Neufeld reported that the digital map files Elections BC use include proprietary information that Elections BC is not permitted to share with other users. He circulated a handout to Committee members describing options for licensing the base map information used by Elections BC.

Voting area redistribution and updating of base map information has been completed for all electoral districts. Voting area maps are being finalized and made available on the Elections BC website. These files are the same as those used by Elections BC to produce printed maps. Parties are encouraged to download these print files, manipulate them to suit their needs and have them printed locally.

There is a government initiative underway to integrate all base map information into one comprehensive file. In the future, it is possible that non-proprietary base map information will be available to registered political parties.

Draft EBC Price List and Related Policies:

Elections BC is trying to ensure that product pricing matches the actual internal cost to produce items such as voters lists and maps. Draft policies concerning the provision of EBC products and pricing were distributed in advance of the meeting for Committee members' review.

It is proposed that an electronic copy of the voters list will be provided to political parties and MLAs twice per year (May and November) for a small administrative fee of $20. The production of these lists coincides with Elections BC's processing of National Register of Electors data, so the list will be as current as possible at these production times. There will be a cost of $255 for copies produced outside this schedule. Street indexes and maps can be bought, but are available for free on the Elections BC website.

Electronic copies of the preliminary (Day 0) and revised (Day 14/15) voters lists for the province or for a particular electoral district will be provided at no cost to parties that request them in advance, in writing. Constituency associations must request copies of the list through their political party or MLA.

Candidates are entitled to two printed copies of the preliminary and revised lists, and may request up to eight additional copies. District Electoral Officers will encourage candidates to make use of electronic rather than printed lists, to reduce the cost of reproduction as well as destruction post-election. Candidates will continue to receive a candidate kit containing a copy of the *Election Act*, voting area maps for their electoral district and a printed street index, all at no charge.

Political parties who wish to order voters lists or electoral district voting area map sheets should contact Randy Parker, Director, Geographic and Voter Data Services.

Elections BC Communications and Outreach Activities:

Elections BC is about to launch a public campaign encouraging eligible B.C. residents to register, confirm or update their voter registration. Current information indicates that, as a result of the recent merge of National Register of Electors data, 89% of eligible B.C. voters are registered, but up to 1/3 are not registered at their current address. Elections BC expects to process one million voter transactions between now and the end of the election, with a target of 92% of eligible B.C. residents registered at the conclusion of general voting day.

The general election and referendum householder pamphlet encourages public use of the Online Voter Registration system (OVR) or the Elections BC 1-800 number to update their registration. Following the householder, letters will be sent to "empty addresses" (where Elections BC does not have a voter registered) encouraging qualified individuals to register. There will also be notices sent to voters on the list who did not vote in the last two electoral events, and whose record has not be confirmed from any other source, advising them to contact Elections BC or their registration record will be deleted.

Elections BC will also be conducting outreach activities after District Electoral Officers open their offices on April 6th, encouraging individuals to register in person at DEO or Service BC - Government Agent offices. Enumeration activities will be conducted in special voting areas, such as long-term care facilities, and shelters/social service agencies that serve individuals who are homeless. Harry Neufeld wrote to all MLAs on January 18, 2005, inviting their feedback on appropriate locations to enumerate homeless persons in their electoral district.

Outreach to Youth: A question was raised regarding visiting high schools, universities and colleges in order to get eligible students registered. There could be a significant number of eligible youth voters registered if some effort is expended engaging them. An advertisement has been placed in university and college student calendars. Elections BC has distributed an education kit to all Grade 11 social studies teachers. As well, Elections BC will be providing

some material support (in the form of ballot screens and boxes) to 'Student Vote BC,' a non-partisan group that runs mock elections in schools. This group has run mock elections in Alberta and Ontario, as well as across the country during the last federal election.

In addition, Elections BC has employed a youth liaison officer (as well as three other liaison officers to network with the Indo-Canadian, Chinese-Canadian and First Nations communities) to organize and attend youth events to promote youth registration.

Paul George noted that the Green Party supports lowering the voting age to 16 in order to engage youth while they are still in school.

Harry Neufeld noted that just by merging the federal and provincial voters lists, the number of B.C. youth registered increased from 22% (measured in March 2003) to almost 50%. Some advertising will be done via media that is more frequently accessed by youth, such as radio and theatre advertising.

The Committee recommended that statistics on youth registration be posted prominently on the Elections BC website, to highlight the increase in youth registration and encourage further interest amongst the public and the media. This information could be broken down by electoral district in order to encourage greater participation.

General Election Calendar:

Committee members were advised that the general election calendar, including specific dates, is available on the Elections BC website (see www.elections.bc.ca/elections/provgenelection2005.pdf).

District Electoral Officers:

Committee members were advised that about half of the DEOs who will be working during the upcoming election have experience from previous elections. Others are new to their role. Elections BC has modified its competition and screening processes to ensure that individuals with appropriate skill sets are appointed. In addition, training has been expanded, is more hands-on, and has an increased focus on standards and expectations. The DEO training manual has been updated and improved, and a greater investment is being made in training materials for election officials, such as a standardized instructional DVD with associated workbooks.

Next Meeting:

The next meeting of the Election Advisory Committee will be scheduled following the May 17, 2005 general election.

ELECTIONS BC
A non-partisan Office of the Legislature